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SUBJECT: UN SECRETARIAT CONSIDERS CHANGES TO GEORGIA MISSION

REF: USUN 1181

Classified By: Ambassador Rosemary DiCarlo for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. The UN Secretariat is leaning toward recommending an enhanced mandate for the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) when the SYG releases his periodic report in February 2009. The report will likely recommend a small peacekeeping mission for Georgia/Abkhazia of about 700 troops, or alternatively, an enhanced observer mission to monitor an as-yet undetermined security regime in the zone of conflict between Abkhazia and Georgia proper. In internal discussions, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) had sought to keep the current UN mandate, but the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) believed that a stronger recommendation was necessary due to the deteriorating situation in the Georgia/Abkhazia zone of conflict. The UN recommendations will not directly address the conflict in South Ossetia, but the SYG report may suggest an expansion of the responsibilities for the UN Mission and the SRSG. The German Mission has circulated a non-paper with ideas for an integrated UN mission in Georgia/Abkhazia that focuses on meeting the needs of the local population and coordinating between Georgia and Abkhazia-- but lacking details about a peacekeeping/monitoring regime. END SUMMARY.

AN ENHANCED GEORGIA MISSION

12. (C) The UN Secretariat has begun to solidify its likely recommendations for the future of UNOMIG to be included in the SYG report on Georgia/Abkhazia. Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Johan Verbeke will submit his draft of the report to New York by January 20, 2009. The SYG plans to issue the report by February 5, in advance of a SC meeting during the second week of February and the February 15 expiration of the UNOMIG mandate.

13. (C) According to our contacts in the Secretariat, the SYG's report, strongly influenced by the views of SRSG Verbeke, will conclude that UNOMIG has been rendered meaningless by the existence of Russian and Abkhaz forces in the security zones, the de facto dissolution of the CIS peacekeeping force, and the termination of the Moscow Agreement. In our conversations, DPA and DPKO have cited numerous violations of the now-defunct Moscow Agreement arrangements, but have lamented that there is no clear mandate to do more than report on the violations.

14. (C) SRSG Verbeke is hoping to use the ongoing Geneva talks to build consensus around a new security regime for the zone of conflict between Abkhazia and Georgia proper, and he plans to include recommendations for such a regime in the SYG's report. Similar to the Moscow Agreement, the regime would include a security zone along both sides of the administrative border between Abkhazia and the rest of Georgia. No armed forces or heavy military equipment would be permitted within the security zone. Though the Moscow Agreement security zone was 12 km wide on either side of the administrative border, the SYG will likely recommend a

smaller width of about 3 km on either side. There would also be a wider restricted weapons zone on both sides of the security zone. DPA and DPKO believe that neither the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) or the current UNOMIG force would have the capacity to adequately enforce such a security regime, and accordingly, the SYG will recommend that a new Georgia mandate include an expanded peacekeeping element, consisting of one battalion of about 700 peacekeepers. (Note: There were 134 military observers and 17 civilian police personnel as of the issue of the last SYG Report on October 3, 2008.)

15. (C) SRSRG Verbeke acknowledged to USUN as reported in Reftel, that a "classical" peacekeeping operation may not be politically feasible to achieve, but he told us he would nevertheless recommend it in the expectation that it would encourage the Security Council to create a more robust military monitoring mission. Secretariat contacts have also told us privately that there had been substantial internal debate about whether to recommend a more robust peacekeeping role for the UN at all. DPKO had argued that the UN mandate should remain as it currently is, and slowly build up its credibility with the Abkhaz. DPA had taken the view that the SYG's recommendations would need to reflect the reality that the situation in Abkhazia has become untenable. DPA and Verbeke believe the SYG could not plausibly recommend continuation of a "meaningless" UNOMIG mission, while the security situation in Abkhazia was continuing to deteriorate.

16. (C) Since the UN's mandate only covers the situation in Abkhazia, the SYG's recommendations will not address the conflict in South Ossetia. Secretariat sources tell us,

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however, that the SYG will recommend an expanded role for the UN in monitoring human rights and facilitating IDP returns. This could be extended into a larger role in Georgia and/or the wider region, but the Secretariat believes that this would need a new mandate from the Security Council. In the expectation that Russia will try to bring the Geneva talks to a conclusion, the SYG may also recommend a specific mandate from the Security Council for the SRSRG to conduct a good offices mission in search of a longer term resolution to the Abkhazia/Georgia conflict.

GERMAN NON-PAPER

17. (C) Separately, the German Mission has circulated a Food For Thought paper (emailed to IO/UNP) that suggests an "integrated mission embedded in the UN family". The paper lists two main objectives for a new UN mission: meeting the needs of the local population in areas such as return of refugees and IDPs, facilitating humanitarian assistance, and ensuring the reliability of infrastructure (including the supply of power from the Enguri hydro-electric power plant), etc.; and coordinating and mediating between the parties to the conflict. The German paper also keeps open the possibility of a military observation element involved in ad hoc observation and investigation of incidents, as well as patrolling within the specific zone of conflict as defined by the Moscow Agreement.

18. (C) The German Mission has emphasized to us that they do not see the Geneva process as arriving at any short term results that could be translated into a new UN mandate. It is therefore important in their view to use the opportunity of the UNOMIG renewal to put arrangements in place that may last for several years. The Germans understand that a technical rollover of UNOMIG may be necessary in February 2009, but that it should only be used to buy time for negotiations over a more permanent arrangement.

19. (C) In contrast to the Germans, our French colleagues report that Paris would favor a technical rollover of the existing UN mandate pending the outcome of the Geneva

process. They would be reluctant to conduct a separate and parallel negotiation over the UN mandate in early 2009 that would compete with Geneva. The French and U.K. Missions have both indicated they are open to a more robust peacekeeping or military monitoring mandate, that would include a separation of forces regime and an international peacekeeping or monitoring presence on both sides of the zones of conflict. France also favors engaging the Abkhaz de facto leaders to enlist their support for a security regime in Abkhazia.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) There is a widespread expectation among other Council members that another technical rollover of UNOMIG will be necessary in February due to lack of time to consider recommendations from the Secretary-General. However, as reported in Reftel, Russia may decide it is in its interest to seek a revised mandate in February, rather than agree to another technical rollover. We would also expect Russia to push for direct participation by Abkhaz de facto authorities in either a formal Security Council meeting to discuss next steps on the UN mandate or an informal Arria-style meeting.
END COMMENT.
Khalilzad